



words & vision

UCFV FACULTY & STAFF ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

Volume 16, Number 3

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF THE FRASER VALLEY



STAFF

ASSOCIATION
WILL HOLD THE
ANNUAL GENERAL
MEETING

ON
TUESDAY, APRIL 29, 2008
10:00 a.m. - noon
Abbotsford Campus,
Lecture Theatre.
Social to follow.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!



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January/February 2008

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF THE
FRASER VALLEY LIBRARY

From The Editor

Welcome to the spring edition of Words and Vision. Once again, we have lots to share with you. With the growing acceptance of the student-as-consumer model in education, the end of mandatory retirement, the transition to becoming a regional university, and the consequent focus on ranking, evaluation and accommodation, all happening in the midst of decreasing enrollments, there are many issues for us to consider. In this edition our president, Scott Fast, addresses concerns raised by staff and faculty; for example, centralized timetabling at UCFV. Welcomed by administrators as a means of providing greater access to our courses, it is feared by some as likely to create havoc in scheduling, and viewed by others as a means of controlling faculty — this is an important matter for your attention. Please read Scott's letter to you and join in the discussions on the website www.ucfv-fsa.ca. More than ever, we need your involvement in and support of our union as we navigate through these changes and work to understand the impact they will have on us.

Since distribution of the last Words and Vision, we have been meeting with staff and faculty and, in this issue, we will be discussing a concern common to all — evaluations. Although much of the empirical research on this topic deals with the evaluation of faculty members, many of the questions raised and conclusions drawn in the research are relevant to the evaluation of staff. The validity of evaluation methods has long been the focus of those who conduct research on the effectiveness, reliability, administration, interpretation, and consequences of the use of student evaluations of professors. Much of the research and theory suggests that the new model of student as consumer, and the consequent proliferation of evaluations based on consumer satisfaction provides little hope of maintaining the quality of education and, in fact, may be responsible for lowering academic standards. Although they aim to alarm and activate their readers, there are some interesting assessment and legal issues raised on the website of the Society for the Return to Academic Standards (SFRTAS). Our website provides the link to this and to several articles on the topic of evaluation.

See also the reports of Kulwant Gill (Human Rights) and Lori Wirth (Status of Women) who, as our representatives on Federation of Post Secondary Educators (FPSE) committees, have been working with other locals on issues of concern to everyone. Please note their requests for your support and please contact them if you would like to support the work they are doing on our behalf.

Rhonda Snow

From The President

THE GOOD NEWS

Management has produced a balanced budget and announced that they do not anticipate any layoffs. There will be some hiring for both some staff and some faculty positions.

By the time the dust settles, there may or may not be a bit more or a bit less work for sessional instructors. But to repeat the good news, management does not anticipate any layoffs.

THE NOT SO GOOD NEWS

These days I am coming into contact with an increasing number of faculty and staff who say they get the uneasy feeling that while we all pay homage to what we have built at UCFV and the recognition we have rightly received, nevertheless our newest administrative leaders seem to want to lead us somewhere else and expect us to blindly follow. And I hear these concerns from an increasingly wide range of employees from an increasingly wide range of departments, schools, roles, ages and years of service.

Many have reacted to the approach taken to the selection process for the new dean positions. Many consider it disrespectful to existing faculty, both in particular and in general, and many suspect the process points toward discontinuity rather than continuity. And, they say, with the hiring of a new President at UCFV on the horizon, senior management becomes, by design, increasingly disconnected from UCFV's institutional culture, history of community involvement, and traditions of excellence. I am not at

all sure as to how widespread this view is among faculty and staff, but I hear it more all the time.

Others come to similar conclusions based on what they perceive as a basic change in the tone of their interactions with administrators. When I point out that this year has been more difficult than those immediately previous because we have had to walk the enrollment/funding tight rope, they say it is more than that, that the tone has become rigid, hierarchical and, too often, dismissive.



My tendency in the role of FSA President for the past three and a half years has been to discourage plot theories, fears based on worst-case scenarios, and rumor based institutional mood swings. It has been my experience that most problems at UCFV are solved by looking at the details rather than for the devil, and that management has been willing to engage us on most issues, not out of obligation but out of a sound understanding that it is only by working together that we can build and have built a significant and effective institution of post-secondary education.

But, regrettably, my view is changing. In recent meetings of the Labour and Management Committee (LAM) where senior management and

representatives for the FSA Executive have met regularly for years to raise, discuss, and work out issues of concern to either or both parties, the climate has gone from being cordial and productive to one where some representatives of senior management seem annoyed to have us raise even small matters of concern. Where in the past senior management openly engaged FSA concerns and, on many issues, felt informed by our input, now we cannot help but feel we are merely being endured. And this at UCFV, where our history of labour-management relations is held up as both unique and exemplary across Canada.

We shall see what we shall see, and the FSA Executive will do what we can to keep you informed and try to shape events. But we all need to maintain an increased level of vigilance as to what we see coming down the pipe that appears problematic. All FSA members — staff, faculty, department heads and directors, those on advisory committees, SAC's and UCC, cannot assume that the input into policy development we have enjoyed in the past and have come to expect will be received in the same spirit or received at all. This is not a time we should rely on the good intentions of management or our culture of cooperation that has by and large served us so well in the past. All may still be more or less

well at UCFV, but all is well only if we all take steps to keep it that way.



Scott Fast

From the Staff Vice-President

Well, here we are, back for another semester at UCFV. Welcome. Let me start by giving you a condensed report on the series of Staff meetings that I held last term at our various campuses. The reason for the meetings was to hear your thoughts on how things are going and how they could perhaps go better.

There were a total of five meetings - two in Abbotsford, and one each at the other campuses. A total of 33 staff members came out to the noon hour meetings scheduled for Hope, Abbotsford, Mission and Chilliwack.

Representation was from a great variety of departments: Employee Services, Trades, Social Work and Human Services, Payroll, University House, Faculty Services, Student Life, Library, ITS, Purchasing, Health Sciences, Admissions and Records, ESL, Hope Campus, Bookstore, UCC, Registration, ECE/CYC and IMS.

Our Communications Chair, Rhonda Snow, and Staff Contract Administrator, Heidi Tvete, were also able to attend some of the meetings. Thank you to both of you for your presence.

Some main topics that you discussed were job evaluation, lack of a job description, how the job classification system (JCAC) works, retirement, staff implications for University status, selection advisory committees (SAC), and stress. Quite a diversity, I must say.

And there are no quick answers to these issues. The job classification system is a very important area, and is under review in order to improve the process. In the last *Words and Vision* newsletter (volume 16, No. 2, Nov/Dec 2007), Heidi provides a good JCAC information update.

One critical area that is on some of your minds is what might happen to our joint Faculty and Staff Association upon UCFV becoming a University. Will we continue to stay together as a single association or not?

Although there is always discussion somewhere within parts of our membership to split into two (or more) unions, the strong consensus is that we work best as a joint group - a single collective. There have been challenges to this concept, and this will probably stay with us. Actually, in a reverse sort of way, it is, perhaps, this opposition that strengthens us and bonds us even closer....but don't say anything!

I do not have the sense that there is any over-arching desire to split away from our joint FSA. My sense, in fact, is for the opposite. Indeed, most feel there is a great advantage to having a joint union. Our working relationship with each other and with management has benefited from this shared arrangement.

In this vein, one undertaking that I will embark upon is to explore the effects of moving from a University College to a University. I want to look into any staff issues that arose at the two University Colleges in Kamloops and Kelowna during or after their transition period to full University status.

I am arranging a road trip to visit both Thompson Rivers University in Kamloops and UBC Okanagan in Kelowna where I plan to meet with our counterparts at those institutions. I hope that we can learn from their experiences, and be more prepared as UCFV succeeds in taking us from University College to University (of Southern British Columbia?). I will report back.

Richard Heyman



From the Contract Chair

I have only one very brief report this month. I am working with Employee Services to produce a document addressing what we anticipate employees' questions are concerning the implications of the elimination of mandatory retirement. For example, what changes in benefits or coverage might you expect if you choose to work beyond the age of 65? We have gathered some questions from the FSA executive. ***If you are really speedy and email me before we finish writing this, I may be able to include your specific question.*** I am not yet sure whether the publication will be printed and placed in everyone's mailbox, or whether we will make the information available online, but in any case, the FSA will notify you of the means to access it.

Virginia Cooke

From the Faculty Vice-President

In the past, when discussing the topic of faculty evaluation with others, I have appeared to be something of a minimalist. I speculate that my tendencies are a result of my own experiences and may not result in a view others share. I want to take this opportunity to set out my position just as an invitation for reaction and response. Please do not read this as anything other than what I would put forward in a conversation on the topic. I am not urging that institutional policy be made to fit exactly what I am suggesting.

As I see it, faculty evaluation at an institution such as ours can take three forms. It can be solely based on student evaluation, it can be based entirely on peer review or it can be a combination of student evaluation and peer review. When I first arrived at UCFV the process was exclusively confined to student evaluation. The implementation of the IPEC policy for new B contracts has added a peer review dimension. If we are now at point where we could imagine further changes to the evaluation policy, it looks as if we could reduce, increase or eliminate the peer review dimension. The idea of eliminating the student review feature seems like an obvious non-starter. So the question is what to do with peer review and my temptation is to advocate its elimination. Or, if it is here to stay or intensify, it needs to be supplemented in ways I will mention later.

My comments may make it look as if I have had a rough time being evaluated by my peers. On the contrary, my peer evaluations, which took place at several different institutions, have been entirely positive experiences. That, however, is part of the problem. When I compare what I went through with what has happened to others who have shared their experiences with me, they either have similar accounts or they have found it anything but positive. The result then is that peer review turns out to be benign or vicious with little in between. Now I realize my evidence here is entirely anecdotal and severely limited. I also know that we may think the split reveals a reasonably anticipated

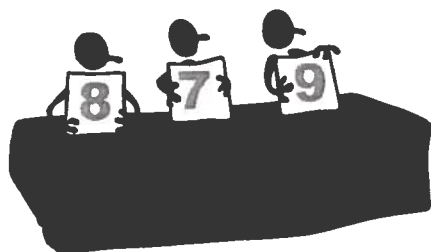
... I could offer advice and suggestions based on my experience, but I don't think I have the qualifications to judge others because, quite simply, I have not been trained to judge teaching ...

outcome. We could conclude that those who teach well will find it positive whereas those who teach poorly do not. Although I would like to indulge the conceit that comes with this assertion, I find the assumptions being made troubling. If peer review is merely a mechanism to weed out the 'bad teachers' aren't we waiting too long in the process to do so. I would think that we need to discover this in the interview and hiring phase and not use the classroom as a testing ground. The next thought might be that the true nature of one's teaching can only be detected in the context of an actual classroom and that peer review provides a safeguard at that stage. However, why not then contend that student evaluations provide this safeguard? I suspect that we might then assert that students do not know how to fully or accurately gauge teaching. If we do reach this kind of conclusion, we have to pause and think about what it actually entails.

There are two immediate concerns that arise here. The first is peculiar in that this conclusion seems to be a reason for eliminating student evaluations as opposed to defending peer review. However, getting rid of student evaluations would seem counterproductive and awkward. Students do provide us with important and relevant information about teaching. Claiming in some way that students are not able to evaluate instructor performance but yet hold that they should still be allowed to evaluate us would make the student evaluations look like some kind of odd charade. It could be countered that peer review supplements what

students have to say by bringing in expertise that students, by their nature as students, cannot possess and that is why it is preferable to have both. This brings me to my second concern, which is that we seem to be assuming

that peers are experts on teaching. This assumption may seem reasonable but it looks to me as if it arises from a conceptual conflation. There is a difference, I think, between being an expert teacher and a teaching expert. At UCFV I have daily interaction with expert teachers, people who teach well. I cannot know if all these people are teaching experts. To be such an expert seems to require a knowledge of how to teach which is not necessarily identical to the ability to teach. If, for example, I personally were asked to review a peer, all I can do is compare what he or she does in the classroom with what I do. I am not in a position to hold that what I do is equal, superior or worse to what my peer does. I could offer advice and suggestions based on my experience, but I don't think I have the qualifications to judge others because, quite simply, I have not been trained to



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judge teaching. If I don't judge, my presence in the room is pretty much benign. If I do judge when I am not in a position to demonstrate why I should be allowed to judge, then my presence can be vicious in that I may condemn what I have no right to condemn.

We could at this point wonder as to whether I am overanalyzing the role of the peer in the evaluation process. Could it not still be said that the peer will be able to observe when things are going wrong and be able to convey that to the one being evaluated? The answer is clearly 'yes' but the next question is couldn't the students tell us the same things. If what is going wrong is something that only the peer can detect, what kind of epistemological model are we utilizing here? And more importantly, how do we limit the peer to such a menial task when the format of peer review seems so much more wide open? To cut myself off at this point I would just like to add that I am not against having faculty members visit other instructors' classrooms to observe and offer feedback. But that is not what we seem to take to be proper peer review. The point then becomes for me that if it is to be full out peer review, we need to be given help in learning how to evaluate teaching, primarily in the form of courses and workshops. That in itself sounds innocuous, but are we all really willing to go back to class so that we can go back to class?

Glen Baier



From the Faculty Contract Administrator

Article 13: Evaluation

The evaluation of faculty and staff is covered under Article 13 on page 38 of the Collective Agreement, which reads in part: "The purposes of evaluation are: (a) to provide employees with information that will enable them to monitor and improve job skills and effectiveness; (b) to determine an employee's suitability for ~~reappointment or~~ continuing appointment." I have stricken two words from the clause because an agreement reached last summer between the FSA and UCFV has ended the practice of reappointing continuing faculty members every three years. UCFV continues to assert its right to evaluate continuing faculty members every third year.

I consider the evaluations received from my students useful in my ongoing attempt to become a more effective instructor. I have one of my courses evaluated every semester so that I can receive feedback from my students on my own performance. Faculty who are not in the third year of an evaluation cycle may wish to consider having some of their courses evaluated in order to get a better read on their overall teaching performance as well as to prepare for the formal evaluation that takes place every third year. Something else I have been using for a number of years now is a faculty evaluation tool I adopted from a colleague who teaches at Dalhousie University. I am happy to share this tool with you and will send it to anyone who would like to take a look at it. It allows the faculty member to account for their research, publications, committee work, student supervision, community participation, among other things, in addition to the anonymous feedback we all receive from our students every third year.

Article 13.2(a)(ii) asserts that "evaluation criteria and procedures will be established by the Employer in consultation with the employees in the appropriate area and the Standing Committee on Faculty Evaluations." In the almost two years that I have served as Faculty Contract Administrator, I do not recall hearing from this committee. It may be that the committee is not currently active and perhaps it needs to be.

Sessional faculty appointments are covered under Article 12.8 of the Agreement. While there is no longer regularization of sessional faculty at UCFV, sessional faculty do serve a probationary period of 912 hours of instruction or the successful completion of four courses over two academic years [12.8(b)(iii)]. If hired by an SAC and having met these other criteria, sessional faculty ought not be subject to the evaluation of every course taught.

Lastly, it is important to remember that the onus to carry out evaluations remains with the employer. In spite of article 13.2(a)'s assertion that "[e]valuation will take place on a regular basis," clause (d) reminds us that "[i]n the absence of an annual evaluation report, the performance of the employee shall be deemed to be satisfactory for that year."

Curtis Magnuson

From the Staff Contract Administrator

In my role as Staff Contract Administrator, I receive a lot of inquiries from members regarding the evaluation process. As a result, I want to take the opportunity to look more specifically at the purposes of evaluation, times for evaluation, the criteria used in the development of staff evaluations, the procedures for conducting staff employee evaluations and an issue to consider for the future.

Please note that the information I am providing regarding the criteria for developing staff evaluations and the procedures for conducting staff employee evaluations has been taken from the established guidelines set out through the Joint Professional Development Committee (JPDC).

Purposes of Evaluation

Article 13.1 of the collective agreement states that the purposes of evaluation are the following:

- a) to provide employees with information that will enable them to monitor and improve job skills and effectiveness.
- b) to determine an employee's suitability for reappointment or continuing appointment.

Times for Evaluation

Article 13.3 of the collective agreement states the following:

- a) Employees will be evaluated every two years after completion of their probationary period. The employer reserves the right to evaluate on an annual basis and an employee can request an evaluation sooner than the two-year period. It is the Employer's responsibility to ensure that evaluations are carried out.
- b) All new appointees to staff positions will be evaluated twice during their probationary period. The first of such evaluations will occur no later than six (6) months after the initial appointment.

Criteria Used in the Development of a Staff Evaluation

Generally, variables for a staff evaluation are rated using a 3 point likert scale (Good, Satisfactory or Unsatisfactory) or a 5 point likert scale (Exceptional, Good, Satisfactory, Needs Improvement or Unsatisfactory).

The first section of the evaluation is "Duties and Responsibilities". This section is specific to the person being evaluated and the variables should be taken from the employee's job description.

The second section of the evaluation is "Work Habits" and the criteria evaluated in this section are the same for every employee. The variables used in this section are punctuality, initiative, dependability, problem solving, planning, time management, independence, leadership and supervision, teamwork, student welfare, external relations, cooperation, openness to criticism,

technical competence and knowledge of university.

The final section of the evaluation is "Comments" in which evaluators are invited to express their thoughts and opinions freely.

Procedures for Conducting Staff Employee Evaluations

About six weeks before an employee's evaluation is due, Employee Services will create the evaluation. An employee's Supervisor or Director meets with the employee to advise that an evaluation is to be conducted and reviews the criteria and procedures.

The employee chooses a number of people they would like the evaluation questionnaire sent to and the Supervisor or Director does the same. The Supervisor or Director provides Employee Services with a list of evaluators and then distributes the evaluation to the evaluators. Once all responses have been received they will be collated, analyzed and sent out to the Supervisor or Director.

The Supervisor or Director prepares a summarized report based on the responses from the evaluation. The summary report, which usually covers a specific period, should indicate the employee's strengths and weaknesses, include commendations, identify areas for improvement over the coming year, recommend professional development activities for the employee to consider and set objectives for the employee for the coming year.

The Supervisor or Director forwards the evaluation to the Dean or Vice President of the area for review and comments, if desired. The Dean or



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Vice President then signs the report and returns it to the Supervisor or Director.

To complete the evaluation, the Supervisor or Director and the employee meet to review the evaluation report and each of them signs the report acknowledging that the employee has read and discussed the same. The complete evaluation is then forwarded to Employee Services to be placed in the employee's file.

An Issue to Consider for the Future

One issue with respect to staff evaluations that keeps resurfacing is who is able to evaluate a staff member. Currently, other FSA members are the ones presently evaluating staff employees. The question has come up as to the possibility of whether external agencies or students should be able to evaluate a staff member.

The reason that this situation would exist is that there are some staff employees who work extensively with external agencies or with students in their position. In some cases, employees have welcomed feedback from external agencies; however, the feedback goes directly to the supervisor and is not part of the official evaluation. This is because there is not an agreement between the FSA and the Employer that external agencies or students can be surveyed in the same way as internal colleagues.

As this issue has already been raised by FSA members, I would love to hear your thoughts on this issue. Additionally, if anyone has any comments, questions or concerns with respect to staff evaluations please let me know.

Respectfully submitted, Heidi Tvete

From the FPSE Human Rights Rep.

First of all, I'd like to wish everyone a very happy, healthy, and prosperous New Year. Since my last report, I attended the annual Human Rights and International Solidarity Committee (HRISC). This 2-day meeting dealt with issues such as the International Solidarity Fund, Equality Rights in the Workplace (for non-regular faculty), and diversity initiatives. Our Chairperson reported that at the 2007 Federation of Post Secondary Educators (FPSE) AGM, a motion was passed to set aside \$15,000 towards the International Solidarity Fund (ISF). The rationale behind this is that "we share experiences, needs and values with all members of the global community and that we affirm that what we desire for ourselves we wish for all others around the world." Supporting and forming international solidarity partnerships allows us to assist others in their daily struggles for a better life, while helping us to understand the consequences elsewhere of "institutions and policies rooted in our own society."

The fund source is a certain percentage of membership fees. A Committee of the secretary-treasurer, two members from the Human Rights Committee, and two Presidents' Council members will decide on fund disbursements. Currently, \$5,000 has been set aside to support the Co-Development Canada initiatives in Central and South America. We also discussed the possibility of using money from this fund to bring in Third World academics to our institutions to educate us of issues they are facing. Funding proposals can be initiated by any local association, or executive member. *So, if you have any suggestions or ideas as to where you'd like to see this money go, please let me know as soon as possible so that we can put together a proposal.*

On the issue of equality rights for non-regular faculty, everyone agreed that there was a need to educate local

members on non-regular issues. Non-regular faculty at most institutions are still continuing to struggle when it comes to dealing with contract rights and regularization. Fernando Arteaga (College of the Rockies) brought forth a motion that the HRISC recommend to the Presidents' Council to encourage all visiting professors to ensure that their participation in international course instruction does not result in the loss of work for local professors. This motion was carried.

Camosun College conducted a survey to determine which locals have a Diversity/Equity Committee. It seemed that most institutions have a diversity committee of some sort. Micé Albano of Camosun College developed a survey to help their institution identify areas that needed help around diversity issues. This survey will be completed by all Camosun College students, and employees. Results of this survey will be shared with us once the survey has been administered.

The HRISC also made several suggestions for workshops for our upcoming Spring Conference. Some of these included: employment inequality for non-regular staff; how to build networks with other institutions and groups; privatization of water and rivers of BC. It was suggested we invite Sharon McIvor to talk about her case which has been called "one of the most important equality rights cases in Canada, affecting an estimated 300,000 people who were improperly denied Indian status".*

If you have any questions or comments, please contact me via email:
kulwant.gill@ucfv.ca

Kulwant Gill

* See Daphne Bramham's article in the Vancouver Sun on November 9, 2007 - Page A15.

EVALUATION: Some of the Questions and Some of the Answers - Rhonda Snow

1. What's the purpose of evaluation?



There are two primary purposes of evaluation at UCFV and most other institutions: summative (used to make personnel decisions) and formative (helpful feedback for professional development). That is, once you've made it through probation and confirmed that the selection advisory committee made a reasonable choice, the evaluation process is to assist you in your development as a professional. Despite this, many believe that in practice there is little difference in how they are used.

"One of the reasons that SEF [student evaluation of faculty] was instituted—and rightly so—was for informational feedback so that faculty might be more aware of student needs. The instrument has not, however, been used just for informational feedback to professors.... higher education rhetoric is almost universal in stating that the primary purpose of faculty evaluation is to help faculty improve their performance. However, an examination of the systems—as used—indicates that the primary purpose is almost always to make personnel decisions. That is, to make decisions for retention, promotion, tenure, and salary increases." Haskell, 1997

2. Are they valid measures of instructor effectiveness?



There are two main issues of importance here. One involves the statistical validity and reliability of student ratings as a measure of instructor effectiveness, and the other is the question of the training of those interpreting the ratings. There are several forms in use for the evaluation of faculty and staff, most of which were not designed by experts in

the field of survey research. They are of unknown validity and usefulness as measures of employee job performance. In his review of the research, Cohen (1983, cited in Emery, Kramer, & Tian, 2001) concluded that "student ratings are inaccurate indicators of student learning and therefore are best regarded as indices of "consumer satisfaction" rather than teaching effectiveness." (pp.60-61) See also the article by Damron (1996) on our website.

The second issue is the training/expertise of those interpreting the ratings. Franklin and Theall (1990) state that "Even given the inherently less than perfect nature of ratings data and the analytical inclinations of academics, the problem of unskilled users, making decisions based on invalid interpretations of ambiguous or frankly bad data, deserves attention."

3. What are the issues around confidentiality?



There are many restrictions around the publication of student information. We cannot "post student evaluations or grades publicly in any way that makes the student identifiable; papers are not to be left in public places where other students may be able to determine how another student performed; faculty are expected to have a legitimate reason to access student information; and faculty are not permitted to provide information to interested parents or employers without the student's permission", and so on (Haskell, 1997). However, student remarks about faculty are openly published on some university campuses and become available indefinitely on the web. There is no other profession in which evaluations are made public with no recourse to address or validate the comments. UBC now requests faculty sign a release form permitting their evaluations to appear on the UBC version of rateyourprofessor.com. Although faculty must consent to this, those not consenting

run the risk of being perceived as resisting because they have poor evaluations.

Some have questioned the legality of publicly releasing student evaluations of faculty (see e.g., Robinson & Fink, cited in Haskell, 1997). It has been suggested that if a university damages a faculty's reputation by publishing potentially false and anecdotal data from student evaluations, faculty should be able to sue for libel or defamation.

4. Students: consumers or products?



There are lots of ways to describe students today. Frequently, they are referred to as consumers to be served.

In a letter sent to Ann Landers, Crumbly (see SFTRTAS website) wrote the following: "There is a myth in higher education that students are "customers", and they have a right to manage higher education. Students are not customers. Students are products or inventory. Employers, parents and society are the customers of higher education—not students. Students come into the university to be educated and trained".

The product approach views students as the product of the training they receive. The instructor manages the education, seeking to ensure the program provides students with the skills and knowledge required to be successful in their profession, and the program's success is measured in terms of the success of the student 'after' leaving the institution. This measure is one of student achievement, rather than student satisfaction.

5. What about peer evaluations?



Peer ratings of faculty have been suggested as an alternative to student evaluations; however, they are contrary to collegiality, and have the

potential of being divisive and retaliatory in nature. Whereas many believe their colleagues are much better equipped than students to judge the accuracy, currency, or coverage of the subject matter, there is less agreement that peers are equipped to judge how instructors should deliver the material. In some institutions, evaluations are conducted and interpreted by people who are independent of the institution and who are trained specifically in assessment. This is apparently a model used in France where the evaluations are done every couple of years by evaluators who are not connected with the university and who have been trained in the administration and interpretation of surveys (see website of SFTRTAS).

6. What about bad instructors?



There is a need to address the legitimate concerns of students who find themselves with an instructor who is not respectful, fails to maintain scheduled office hours, does not respond to emails or show up to meet students, does not return assignments, etc. Unfortunately, for a variety of reasons the current process of administering student evaluations is not effective in detecting and eliminating these problems. In fact, research has shown that there are many ways instructors can ensure better ratings without improving their instructional support (e.g., Neath, 1996; Trout, 1997). Fortunately if problems exist, students have a number of ways to voice their concerns, including: instructional complaints, academic appeals, and harassment complaints.

7. Is there any harm in lowering standards to please students?



Some students must write exams outside of their academic institution. When their performance on the exam is not consistent with their university grades, they may be able to hold their academic institution responsible for failing to

provide their consumers with what they paid for — an adequate education. (May, 1996)

8. Tenure and the protection of education.



Haskell (1997) argues that the use of student evaluations for personnel purposes creates a threat to the academic freedom of professors by pressuring them to become customer service providers, rather than educators. He points out the uniqueness of the university as a place where open inquiry and critical examination of issues is at the heart of what we strive to accomplish. "Academic tenure is not like seniority in business, civil service, or a union where the purpose of 'tenure' is for the protection of the worker. Unlike these organizations, academic tenure is for the protection of the education function, not individual faculty jobs; it is for the protection of the role of the university in a democratic [and free] society." (Haskell, 1997) If student evaluations of professors are used to make personnel decisions, then professors will be under pressure to adjust their behaviour to the political, social, and pragmatic pressures that exist in their culture at any given time.

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CAUT NEWSWIRE - Dalhousie Professor Entangled in Disturbing Prank

The Dalhousie Faculty Association (DFA) is warning academics and their families to consider their privacy in a new light, after someone posted a cobbled-together slideshow of a professor and his family members on YouTube and other web sites.

Halifax police are investigating the possibility that posting the video constituted a hate crime, due to the racist overtones of the written commentary that accompanied images of the professor's wife and daughters.

Words overwriting the pictures suggested the professor was pimping out his family, and were coupled with audio from a pornographic movie.

"They're quite brazen," said Kevin Grundy, president of the DFA, referring to the person or people responsible for the video. "I don't know what can really be done about it."

The university community was first alerted to the video when messages directing recipients to YouTube were sent out to hundreds of university e-mail addresses. The e-mail was made to appear as if the professor himself had sent the link.

Grundy said the family photos used in the malicious video were originally posted on Facebook, a not untypical activity for many people these days. "I have a Facebook profile myself, lots of people I know do too," he said. The problem is that once pictures are made public on the Internet, they can be copied and altered, Grundy warned.

But, he said, short of never posting photos or information about yourself or your family, it's almost impossible to prevent misuse of the images.

"It's something people should perhaps counsel their children about," he said. "But nowadays is it realistic to expect people to live their lives like that, to hide away?"

The professor and his family have been upset by the ordeal, he reported, but are "comfortable that police are doing the best they can to trace it down."

News and Views from Cindy Oliver, FPSE President

FPSE Forum to Focus on Critical Needs of Post-Secondary Education System

On January 27, our Federation is hosting a forum on critical post-secondary education issues. The event will bring together labour leaders from BC's largest unions, representatives from Metro Vancouver's Chinese-speaking community, Lower Mainland MLAs, representatives from the Canadian Federation of Students as well as Presidents from our Lower Mainland locals.

The focal point of this forum is a presentation by Scott Murray, a post-secondary education policy analyst who has done extensive research on **the importance of post-secondary education in not only building a modern economy, but also contributing to social cohesion and participation.** Murray's research shows that without a substantial commitment by governments, both federal and provincial, to better funding of the public post-secondary system, our provincial and national economies will suffer in the long run.

This is not the first time Mr. Murray has made this presentation. In the late fall of 2007 he made a similar presentation to the Minister of Advanced Education, Murray Coell, and his Ministerial Advisory Committee.

Unfortunately, without concerted effort, Mr. Murray's research will remain behind closed doors, a situation that needs to be reversed.

That's one of the reasons why FPSE has taken the initiative to expand the network of community leaders who hear what Mr. Murray has to say. If the public post-secondary education system is going to reach its full potential, we need to include as many supporters as possible in our efforts to press governments for the investments needed to reach that potential. We also need to do a much better job of working with important community organizations who share our concern about the need to strengthen the range of programs and access within the post-secondary education system.

The forum also comes at a time when the federal and provincial governments are poised to renew their federal-provincial Labour Market Agreement. This agreement maps out the funding support that Ottawa provides for a broad range of labour market programs including adult literacy, English Language Training (ELT) and essential skills development. The renewal of that agreement needs to be widely discussed before the final terms are agreed to and our hope is this forum will be the first step in expanding that public debate and ensuring the best outcome for BC and for post-secondary education.

<http://www.fpse.ca/prescomment/080117prescmt>

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from the FPSE Website*

What's Wrong with Writing at UCFV by Jim Andersen



At UCFV five departments teach writing, and scores of departments use

writing as an instrument for evaluating learning. So if we're doing something wrong, it should be recognized as something fairly important. What I think we are doing wrong is using writing chiefly for assessment instead of for its primary use, which I will attempt to describe here.

In reality if not in intention, we are screening out or punishing with low grades members of marginalized social groups who are always poorly-prepared compared to the sons and daughters of more-privileged social groups.

When you look at our methods of assessment for initial placement, you will see that we test proficiency in reading and writing. This often initially rules out many aboriginal learners, ESL learners (both domestic and foreign) and learners from lower-socio-economic classes. We also do a disservice to "non-traditional students" of various kinds, including those who have been outside of school for a long time.

Writing is indisputably important to learning, but much learning is independent of it, and to equate learning with writing skill is wrong. It is downright harmful to make a fetish of it. Good writing is indeed a desirable outcome of learning, but let's not confuse a mere indicator for the learning itself.



The Right Use of Writing

If writing is only an imperfect measure of learning in the classroom, then what is its proper use? If we focus on writing as a means of assessing learning, we lose the primary benefit of writing, which in my view is intimately tied to self-development. Writing is the most powerful means I know of for self-expression and self-discovery.

When we misuse essays and reports as tests of learning, unintended harmful consequences naturally follow. One consequence is many students will chase the grade, and will neither

... In reality if not in intention, we are screening out or punishing with low grades members of marginalized social groups who are always poorly-prepared compared to the sons and daughters of more-privileged social groups ...

maximize opportunities for learning, nor develop any new understandings of who they are and what their relationship is to what they are writing about.

My focus on *self* will perhaps strike you as naively dismissive of the need for demonstrating knowledge. I am not discounting this—I am simply arguing that *self* comes first, and that real knowledge can only be achieved by individuals who have achieved intellectual maturity (*selfhood*) through essential activities of expressing, discovering and creating. These ought to be the primary activities in a healthy writing program.

Unprepared Students?

When we talk about students being unprepared, shouldn't we reflect on our own lack of preparedness? We frequently talk as if it is the students

who need to change, not ourselves. We have to work with the students we have and are not helping them if our primary message is, through the grades we assign based on the writing assignments we set for them: "You are not good enough." Are we good enough?

It is unreasonable to expect a "non-traditional" learner to think, act, write, read or speak like a traditional learner. To complain that such learners have difficulty expressing themselves (or comprehending lectures or written texts) is foolish.

The challenge to instructors is to fit the curriculum and themselves to their students. Lack of writing ability should be accommodated rather than deplored or "screened out". In the context of writing

instruction, adapting to specific learners is not "dumbing down" curricula—it's using writing properly, not as an assessment instrument solely but as a means for developing our students' *selves*.

UCFV subscribes to a policy of accommodations for students with disabilities. It is sad that we recognize that accommodations must be made for a deaf person, but not for a person who can hear but cannot listen well. We make accommodations for people who cannot see to read, but none for those who can see but cannot read easily. We make accommodations for those who are physically unable to speak but not for those who can speak but not speak fluently. Yet we do not accommodate non-traditional learners, and that's simply wrong.

Jim Andersen

"Centralized" Computer Timetabling - Scott Fast, FSA President

One of the things that faculty need to carefully consider is the seemingly impending imposition of what management likes to refer to as "computer assisted time-tabling" but which seems to be better named "centralized time-tabling."

Virtually everyone who has indicated their concerns to me (and there are many from the entire range of departments and schools) have agreed that UCFV has outgrown its traditional approach to creating a timetable that works best for students and maximizes our FTE production. With some exceptions we presently do a pretty good job of optimizing departmental timetables, but we need to find more systematic approaches to coordinating time-tabling between departments. Everyone seems to agree that the right computer program might well assist us in this task.

But as in most things, the devil is in the details. It is one thing to have departments work out their timetables, submit them to

the scrutiny of a centralized program which will help us to better identify conflicts, problems and inefficiencies, and then give the departments the responsibility and obligation to make the required adjustments. It is quite another to have departments submit their timetable proposals and have the computer program make what it deems to be the necessary adjustments without further consultation with the department.

The problem with the latter approach which most troubles department heads and faculty is that the computer program will never be able to account for the hard and soft variables that need to be taken into account in order to produce an optimum timetable for students and faculty, variables that will only be known and appreciated at the departmental level. Hard variables include taking into account the sub-field specialties of regular faculty members, availability of sessional instructors with particular qualifications, number of course preps, etc.

Soft variables are important as well. Faculty need to be able to organize blocks of time so they can efficiently mark essays, prepare lectures and new courses, and engage in scholarly activity. As an institution we provide very little support for research and scholarly activity — the least we can do is to allow faculty, where possible,

the opportunity to schedule blocks of time in their weekly schedule to stay current in their field. Furthermore some faculty members thrive on early morning classes while others are quite happy to teach a majority of their classes in the evening. Family and health issues often come into play in this regard. Faculty members are also expected to participate on UCFV committees or the Faculty and Staff Association, or are members of community boards and commissions. These are important considerations and it is at the department level that decisions can be best made as to how to accommodate the requirements of the global timetable at the expense of as few of these variables as possible.

It has been difficult to get consistent answer from various administrators as to just how the "new" computerized approach will work in practice. Some have insisted that final decisions as to how best to provide what is required will reside with departments. Others seem to insist, in a way that many faculty have found insulting, that these decisions will be taken out of the hands of departments altogether and that the computer will do our thinking for us. ***Be alert as to what is coming and make your concerns known.***

Scott Fast





Student Appeals

The student appeal process (both of grades and faculty conduct) which with some modification has been in place for a decade, has worked well until recently, but has become increasingly problematic. While we all agree that students should have recourse when they feel they have been treated or marked unfairly, some students have exploited the existing process, and simply refuse to take "no" for an answer at any stage in the process. I have reviewed some simple grade appeals where the various stages in the process have gone on for the better part of a year and produced documentary files more extensive than those accompanying a Supreme Court of Canada application. The UCFV community has recognized that we need to rethink the process and the FSA is active in that discussion.

Scott Fast

From the FPSE Status of Women Rep.

The Women's Centre at UCFV still has not been given designated space but the future of the Women's Centre is more secure at this point. We received a response to a memo we sent to senior administration voicing our concerns, and in return received a request for information about the Centre's mandate, purpose, the nature of the activities and traffic. This information will be used to gain a clear understanding of the Centre's space requirements which will inform the process of identifying or designing an appropriate space.

In the interim, a temporary office space has been provided in Student Services and a work-study student will help us with research, planning meetings and events, and other responsibilities. The Women's Centre website has been transferred into a format compatible with other UCFV pages. Thank you to Robyn Harcott in the ITS Dept. for this work! Now I am able to perform the website maintenance when necessary. The name was changed slightly to the Women's Resource Centre and it is now listed in the UCFV directory. Here is a link to the new website <http://www.ucfv.ca/WomensResource.htm> (still under construction).

Partnerships with Community Organizations:

The Women's Resource Society of the Fraser Valley (WRSFV) is the largest women-serving organization in the valley, with transition houses in Abbotsford and Mission, and with additional second stage housing and crisis housing in Mission. They provide counselling to women in

relationship violence, have outreach to pregnant teens, outreach to street women and provide support to children who witness violence. The WRSFV has offered support to our efforts to reinstate and preserve the Women's Centre on campus.

We need to look at other UCFV campuses as well, and the idea of partnerships with the Ann Davis Transition Society, and the Chilliwack, Hope and Agassiz campuses.

National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women

An event was held on Thursday, December 6th and speakers were:

~ **Satwinder Bains**, Director of the Centre for Indo Canadian Studies

~ **Pamela Willis**, Executive Director of the Women's Resource Society of the Fraser Valley

International Women's Day

Celebrated on March 8, International Women's Day (IWD) is the global day connecting all women around the world and inspiring them to achieve their full potential. IWD celebrates the collective power of women past, present and future...

*Lori Wirth
Ext. 4006*

Note: March 8th falls on a Saturday this year so an alternate date for an event will be announced soon.

Campus 2020 and the Phony Debate - FPSE President's Comment

When Geoff Plant was first appointed to conduct the Campus 2020 review of BC's post-secondary education system, caution flags were raised. Many wondered how the former BC Liberal Cabinet Minister could bring objectivity to such an important review. After all, this was the same Geoff Plant who sat at the provincial cabinet table when massive and profoundly regressive changes to BC's post-secondary education system were both conceived and approved.

After almost a year of review, Plant's final report was released. Not surprisingly, many of his recommendations simply reinforced the policies that were adopted by his BC Liberal cabinet colleagues during their first term in office.

With more balanced recommendations, Plant's report could have formed the basis for a new consensus about what the future of post-secondary education in BC should look like. Public opinion certainly suggests that voters want to see meaningful reforms that include better access, more options for students looking to either start or complete their post-secondary education and, most of all, greater

investment by government in our public post-secondary institutions.

Unfortunately, Plant's report has not delivered that consensus. In fact, his report is now beginning to create divisions within the public post-secondary education system, divisions that could easily pit institutions against one another in the fight for limited provincial dollars for post-secondary education.

Nowhere is that division more apparent than in the current debate over university status. For example, Plant's report calls for changes that tip the balance in favour of BC's big three universities. He calls for a "Georgia Strait research cluster" comprised of UBC, SFU and UVic where he recommends targeting "at least" 95% of provincial research funding.

The recommendation has been interpreted by some as a commanding vote of confidence in the big three universities and an indication that provincial post-secondary education policy should give special preference to those three universities. However, the sad fact is that Plant's report does not call for any substantial boost in provincial research funding. In effect, his recommendations will support research by having public institutions squabble over a more limited slice of provincial research funding.

Plant's university-centric views have also created tensions within the college, university-college and institutes system where years of chronic under-funding have translated into less support for students and fewer course offerings. As

well, the funding crunch has pushed some institutions into questionable partnership arrangements with private entities, arrangements that have serious fiscal and reputational consequences for the institution.

Just as troubling, Plant's report has emboldened some within the "Georgia Strait" group to contend that university status is an exclusive "brand" that warrants special protection. In a scene that is reminiscent of George Orwell's *Animal Farm* when the commandments are amended to say, "All animals are equal, but some are more equal than others," Mr. Plant's supporters question the value and ability of colleges and university-colleges to meet the requirements of university status.

In their enthusiasm to support Mr. Plant's prescription for change, these proponents completely ignore the obvious problems that have been created by the provincial government over the last six years. Deregulated tuition fees have either 'priced out' thousands of students from post-secondary education or forced those who remain into deeper debt. The government's preference for so-called self-regulation of private institutions has led to controversy, scandal and unsavory practices within some of those institutions, an outcome that taints the reputation of every post-secondary institution, whether it's public or private. But most of all, the steady decline in real per-student operating grants from the provincial government has undermined the ability of public post-secondary institutions to deliver the



... continued from page 14

accessible and affordable education that post-secondary students both need and deserve.

Creating division within the ranks of our public post-secondary system is a convenient escape hatch for bad public policy. Mr. Plant's report has serious flaws in both its analysis and recommendations. The way forward needs to target those flaws, not devolve into a phony debate about who should win and who should lose.

In our 2007 round of provincial bargaining FPSE succeeded in getting a policy table that will bring together senior administrators, our locals and the Ministry of Advanced Education to address the serious issues facing our post-secondary education system. Whether it's access to University Transfer programs or the strained relationship between our institutions and the Industry Training Authority, our policy table provides the opportunity for real input by faculty on the future of our post-secondary education system.

That's how our organization is going to advocate for change, using our collective resolve for collective gains that improve the opportunities and outcomes for all our institutions and our students.

Cindy Oliver
FPSE President

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from the FPSE Website*

From the Social Convener

Greetings and Happy New Year!

The FSA/UCFV Christmas dinner and dance has come and gone. Over 100 people attended the event and anecdotal evidence suggests most people enjoyed themselves. Heartfelt thanks to those who worked hard to organize the event.

Thank you to all who donated money and gifts for the door prizes:

- UCFV Board of Governors
- UCFV President's Office - Skip Bassford
- Academics - Dianne Common
- Administration - Tim Segger
- Agriculture Department
- Arts and Applied Arts - Eric Davis
- Employee Services - Diane Griffiths
- Finance - Jackie Hogan
- Professional Studies - Ian McAskill
- Research & Grad Studies - Yvon Dandurand
- Science, Health & Human Services - Wanda Gordon
- Teaching and Learning - Karen Evans
- UCFV Alumni Association
- UCFV Bookstore
- C-Lovers Fish and Chips
- Minter Gardens
- Touch Back
- Jim and Cindy Anderson - Band Member
- Rhonda Schuller, Instructor
- UCFV Faculty and Staff Association

In keeping with the "Evaluation" focus of this edition of Words & Vision - the social committee needs your feedback. If you attended the 2007 FSA/UCFV Christmas Dinner and Dance - **tell us what you liked, what you did not like, and what you would like to see at the 2008 event.**

If you did not attend the dinner and dance this year or in previous years, tell us why you don't attend and what would encourage you to attend in the future.



On behalf of the social committee ... thank you for your feedback and ideas.

Mandy Klepic
Tel: 604.851.6333
mandy.klepic@ucfv.ca.

FSA Website

Have **you** checked out our website yet?

You'll find:

- copies of **Words & Vision**
- the **current Collective Agreement**
- **links** to other organizations
- **Retirement News**
- **Labour News**



There is a **members-only** section which contains these topics:

- Bulletin Board/Members' Forum
~ **Forum topics** include: Evaluation, Centralized Timetabling, Retirement, Pensions, Hiring Practices
- **Hot Issues**
- **Discussion Topics**
- **Financial Statements**
- **Frequently Asked Questions**

To log in to the members-only section of the website (www.ucfv-fsa.ca)

1. Go to: www.ucfv-fsa.ca
2. Click on Member Log In.
3. Enter your user name.
Your user name is: **FirstnameLastname** (case sensitive, no spaces) - the same as it appears on your UCFV email address.
Eg. Fred.Smith@ucfv.ca would be: **FredSmith**.
4. Enter your password. Your password is made up of your **Firstname** (Case sensitive) and the **last 3 digits** of your employee number (no spaces) Eg. **Fred123**.

It is recommended that you **change your password**.

To do so:

- Step 1: Go go: www.ucfv-fsa.ca/admin.
- Step 2: Enter user name and password in appropriate fields.
- Step 3: On the main screen, in "My Preferences" box, click "My Account".
- Step 4: In the "Edit User" box, enter your new password into "Password" box (you will have to re-enter it in the box below). Remember, passwords are case-sensitive.
- Step 5: Press **Submit**.
- Step 6: Click on "Log Out".

If you encounter any difficulty with this process, contact Myra Hughes at the FSA office. Email: myra.hughes@ucfv.ca.

TO DO LIST:

1. Send questions about the elimination of mandatory retirement to the contract chair. Refer to Page 3.

Email: Virginia.Cooke@ucfv.ca.

2. Send Heidi comments as to who should evaluate a staff member. Read Page 7.

Email: Heidi.Tvete@ucfv.ca.

3. Respond to Kulwant's request for suggestions. Read Page 7.

Email: Kulwant.Gill@ucfv.ca.

4. Make concerns known regarding Centralized Computer Timetabling. Refer to Page 12.

Email: Scott.Fast@ucfv.ca

5. Read the report on Page 15. Email the Social Convener with comments and ideas.

Email: Mandy.Klepik@ucfv.ca.

6. Check out the members-only section of the FSA website.
www.ucfv-fsa.ca

Words and Vision

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